

Public Service Agreement – Report on Achievements in the Education sector – May 2011

Primary Teachers:

A departmental circular issued on 25 January 2011 directing primary level schools to fully implement those elements of Agreement that have been agreed with INTO. This requires teachers to provide a block of additional hours (36 in a full year, 18 for the balance of the current school year) which will result in the effective elimination of school closures. This has also dealt with the issue of moving staff to different posts of responsibility.

Post-Primary Teachers:

The ASTI and the TUI have now voted in favour of the Public Service Agreement. A Departmental circular issued on 8 April 2011 providing for immediate and full implementation of an agreed document which has the following elements:

- Arrangements for the working of 33 additional hours per school year in order to allow for similar issues as at primary level without diminishing tuition time;
- Flexibility in relation to changes in post of responsibility duties;
- Require a teacher, freed up as a result of a colleague taking their class away from the school, to cover that colleagues absence within timetabled hours;
- Requirement that teachers be timetabled for an additional period of substitution and supervision under that scheme;
- Requirement for further education teachers to cooperate with changed FETAC procedures;
- Redeployment scheme for surplus teachers.

Special Needs Assistants (SNAs):

A Departmental letter issued on 1 February 2011 providing for immediate and full implementation of 2 aspects of the Public Service Agreement relating to SNAs. This implementation gives Management Authorities of schools and VECs:

- greater flexibility in the deployment of SNAs; and,
- greater discretion in the deployment of SNAs during non-instruction days.

The implementation of these aspects of the Agreement should bring greater clarity to the system and facilitate the improved utilisation of resources.

VECs (Non-Teaching staff):

A key priority here is the full implementation of the Government decision to re-structure the VEC system involving a reduction in their number from 33 to 16 following the merger of particular City and County VECs. An 18 month time-frame has been set for this process and constructive discussions have taken place with all Unions representing staff affected by this decision.

A re-deployment protocol has been agreed for grades represented by IMPACT, SIPTU and UNITE across the education sector. Staff have already been re-deployed in the VEC sector utilising the agreed arrangements.

Institutes of Technology:

- Academic Staff:

The TUI have now voted in favour of the Public Service Agreement. A Departmental circular issued on 8 April 2011 providing for immediate and full implementation of an agreed document which has the following elements:

- delivery of an additional 2 lecturing hours per week by Lecturers/Asst. Lecturers where required by management;
- delivery of a further additional hour provided for in the Public Service Agreement by way of timetabled availability of lecturers to students;
- ability for institutes to use student feedback for purposes of quality assurance.

- Non-Academic Staff:

A re-deployment protocol has been agreed for grades represented by IMPACT, SIPTU and UNITE across the education sector. Staff have already been re-deployed in the IOT sector utilising the agreed arrangements.

IOTs have identified the development of new and existing IT systems, and the implementation of online services, as an important enabler of change, service effectiveness and efficiency. This will involve a programme of implementation both nationally and in individual Institutes. This programme of implementation is progressing with key milestones already achieved in a number of important projects.

A further important aspect to highlight in respect of the IOTs is that overall staffing numbers in the sector are on course for a 7.5% reduction by December 2011. This is especially noteworthy given the ongoing upward trend in student numbers attending IOTs.

Universities:

An important achievement to highlight in respect of the Universities is that their overall staffing numbers being reduced by 6% in the period December 2008 to December 2010 whilst in the same period student numbers attending Universities have increased by in excess of 3%.

Update in regard to Shared Services in the Education Sector:

VECs:

“Co-operation with the introduction of shared services in areas such as payroll, student support, procurement and purchasing, ICT and HR Management.”

Student Support

“There are currently 4 different student grant schemes administered by 66 bodies. A Government decision was taken in July 2010 to streamline this process on the basis of one consolidated student grant scheme to be administered solely by one body”

The Department sought expressions of interest in January 2011 from bodies interested in operating the single grant awarding authority.

The Minister has recently decided to conclude the final stage of the evaluation process for the Expressions of Interest submitted for designation of a single awarding authority for student grants. Given that the process is already well advanced and has the capacity to deliver reform as early as 2012, the Minister has decided to continue development of this approach as the initial centralisation model for student grants on the basis that it will allow for the earliest possible reform and centralisation of the student grants administration process. Plans are also in train to introduce a unified grants scheme for the 2011/12 academic year.

Procurement and Purchasing

“Implementation of projects aimed at maximising economies of scale and purchasing in co-operation with the National Procurement Service.”

VECs are co-operating with the NPS and the first tender has been published in relation to the purchase of stationary and similar supplies.

The VECs are co-operating with the National Procurement Service via the Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA) in the area of national purchasing. The NPS has sought information on various market sectors and the VECs have supplied information with regard to their sector. They will then be in a position to buy-in to any tenders organised by the NPS.

Pensions

Roll out of integrated PMG pensions section in the Department of Finance to assume responsibility for pension services in VECs and IOTs.

Thirty three local authorities currently have responsibility for the payment of pensions and retirement gratuities to former employees of Vocational Education Committees and the Institutes of Technology. The Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Finance have recently considered this arrangement having regard to the Government’s policy in respect of shared services, as set out in the Transforming Public Service agenda.

In this context it has been decided that one central body, PMG Pensions Section in the Department of Finance, will assume responsibility in place of the thirty three local authorities, for the pension and gratuity payment function.

Following the introduction of the new arrangements the revised procedure agreed will see VECs now forwarding data on retirees directly to PMG Pensions section.

The implementation process commenced in September 2010. Currently three VECs have implemented the new arrangements with a fourth due to transfer shortly.

Institutes of Technology:

“Co-operation with the introduction of shared services. Arrangements to be put in place to develop a more collaborative approach to the procurement of goods and services in Institutes and the wider third level sector.”

Institutes have already collaborated in shared procurement of electricity and audit services. Further work is ongoing into the scope for shared service arrangements in other areas, as well as the procurement of legal services, various equipment and other services.

Payroll: A detailed examination of transactional elements of payrolls is currently being undertaken with a view to developing a shared service.

Switchboard: work in this area has already delivered savings in two institutes.

A sub group of Secretary/Financial Controllers co-ordinates shared services activities and the IOTI now co-ordinates the Institutes' international activities also.

Universities and other Higher Education Institutes:

Arrangements are being put in place to develop a more collaborative approach to the procurement of goods and services in Universities and the wider third level sector and a shared services steering group has been formed.

“Universities have already collaborated in shared procurement (e.g. electricity procurement) and specific subgroups are now looking at areas identified as offering the greatest potential – Finance, HR and ICT in particular.”

Specific working sub groups of procurement officers are pursuing individual procurement items/categories such as computers, insurance, cleaning services, office supplies, advertising, photocopiers, waste management, and laboratory supplies. New project teams are now examining procurement of ICT software, travel services, legal services.

Discussions are ongoing with the National Procurement Service in regard to purchase of stationary, office supplies and advertising.

In regard to Periodicals and Journals a joint procurement led to savings of €360k. A further project is underway

A saving of €150k was achieved in a joint tender in regard to the purchase of small laboratory equipment.

Other Joint third Level Initiatives

Joint IoT/University Electricity procurement:

Shannon Consortium (UL, MIC, LIT and ITT) - a pilot electricity procurement initiative involving a number of institutions. Target saving of 17% or almost €500k for 2009 was exceeded. A tender for electricity for 2010 was sought for an expanded group of college's with targeted savings of almost €1.5m or 35%.

Dublin Colleges (UCD, TCD, DIT and DCU) - groups of universities and IOTs have been working on energy management programmes. These initiatives have produced considerable identifiable savings. The contract for the main electricity supply to 4 Universities/Institutes has achieved a 40% reduction in the unit cost of electricity for 2010. Savings for TCD alone within this tender are estimated to be in the order of €1m.

Joint IoT/University procurement:

Shannon Consortium has also concluded tenders in respect of stationery, mobile phones and industrial gases. Savings of up to 36% were achieved for the industrial gases in a tender involving nine third level institutions. The number of institutions involved in the group has also increased

Joint IoT/University Library Journals/Periodicals procurement: a joint project involving universities, IoTs, RCSI with an existing spend of over €11m. Tender delivered a 15% saving against existing pricing.

Joint IoT/University Laboratory Supplies procurement: collaboration across the 3rd level sector with a combined spend of €3m with a target saving against existing pricing of 13.5%. A tendering process recently commenced in regard to this project. Other similar tendering processes have also started in regard to purchasing of laboratory gasses and waste management services.